Emotional well-being in communist and post-communist Albania

Msc Arbjola Halimi

Phd. Student,
Psychology Department, Faculty of Education,
Elbasan University "Alexander Xhuvani", Albania
Email: arbjola_h@yahoo.com

Abstract
This article is an attempt to clarify some issues about emotional and psychological wellbeing of Albanian people during the transition period and before. It tends also to make comparison between mental health during communist period and after this. It is assumed that it is a difficult challenge to do so because data we gain are always mist up in the communist period by the savagery of the regime and in the transition period by infuctionality of institution which are presumed to collect and save the data. Regardless to this some of the data shows us that there are important diferencies in emotional wellbeing not only expressed by the nature of a disorder but also intensity and their history of begening. The bad news is that our aspiration to democracie and civil rights has not decreased but increased our mental helth problems after the communism.

Key words: mental health, communism, transition, social factor,

Methodology
This study is based on opened interviews with psychiatric doctors who have had a wide experience on their work, over 23 years at least and more. It has been used some statically indicators over psycho-emotional health in Albania within two different periods and it must be emphases that there are some restriction related to their accuracy cause of the fact that during communism period even healthy people could end up to mental health institution. On the other hand, during transition period confusion and other problematic situations of institutions'' functioning and wider, were created some gaps and lack of evidences and complete registration of cases to a complete database.

Introduction
Emotional wellbeing is considered as a state which determines an important mental state of humans. The last one is one of the indicators. This mental wellbeing is determined by a social cultural context[1] with lots of social and political development. These develops, according to personality and mental health theoreticians, have their influence on this direction (on the contrary with Freud who sees humans and their attitudes as a

---

[1] In reference to cultural psychologist and systemic aproaches

result of inner impacts). That's why their quality needs a certain attention. Most of the cases they can be strong, frequent and cruel, revolutionary, huge flooding without leaving time to people to chose or adapt in a healthy way. Other times they can be slower but their holding can become a killing process for humans on the psychological meaning. Albania as a post-communist country went through difficult realities of communism but also after that because transition took a really long time. At this point it is needed a better concentration on the analyses that has to do with a human being, meaning on the psychological consequences that these psychological periods caused. For this it is needed a certain knowledge and good research of these periods on all fields of life, but mostly on treating them to what they might have done and caused on him.

During the communism period humans are treated on a very mechanical manner.

Prof. Dr. Hamit Beqja[2] says:

Monist indoctrination although was not qualified, was diligence and constantly under pressure at school, family with every kind of propagandas means, social information and massive communication and "in this frame words such as independent judging, debates, remained slogans and pure dermatology". Pg 31. According to him, this indoctrination "feeds" the fanatic subjectivism and influences mechanical thinking (standard) by making human beings passive especially those personality' characteristics related to intellectual appearance and moral ones (identified in the process of education and generation shaping). Human usage, especially in totalitarian societies directs humans toward depersonalization, convenience. In another way, with this manner, human personality affirmation is equal to the attempt to identify them, to know themselves. Humans try, need to see, to feel that is the same as he thinks he is and materialize a life as such. Human's problem identity, of being the same as he think, represent his own personality. Materialization of this identity is exactly the process of self identification, proving what you are. At the same time it is present the need to reveal this identity to other people as well. If there are problems/obstacles there are created some identity crises, personality breakings, huge turnings, difficult situations which start to become traumatic and can open other psychic direction in life.

Monist indoctrination detains freedom of thinking, speaking, ideas attitudes and this is concretized mostly during education in totalitarian countries. Such psychological, spiritual, mental and emotional *mould* (marksizëm-leninizëm) is imposition through a complete system of information elaboration and propaganda. It is developed what is called *psychological deterioration* in some fields, such as intellectual, emotional and the entire personality.

According to Carl Ratner[3] we can speak about an "oppressive psychology" that is the psychological result of social oppression[4] and to the entire psychological mechanisms which protect or conserve this oppression. In other words, social oppression includes a psychological supplemental on victims which contribute its conformity. This construct can help to understand psychological debilities as a product of social oppression by considering them as a last index. Psychological dazing.

"Oppression psychology""1. Detain individual potential of humans' fulfillment, 2 detain fulfillment of its potential for how or what this human being can be in life and in the social life, 3 detain or prohibit human abilities to understand and fulfill themselves (primary function).

He emphasis that social oppression directs us toward psychological oppression and this is not always visible. One of the primary function of social oppression in inability of individuals to understand and fulfill themselves, but is the social oppression which makes the bases, annihilation character function,

---

[2] Hamit Beqja (2000)
[3] Carl Ratner (2013)
[4] He is referring to capitalist social oppression but we used the theory even for the communist peroid

psychological dazing which are seen as social problems (psychological and personal dazing. Ratner emphases that this kind of psychology is not restrained to morbid psycho-pathology because oppression can destroy other normal psychological phenomena.

Oppression psychology includes normal psychology as well as abnormal one, because oppressive normal society unable its citizens in a way so that they can fit to oppression. In this case, it needs people to be pathologically functional or disable (disable and pathological to function over oppressive conditions). Oppressive society is in the boundaries between functional pathology generation and disability because these oppressed people are not till that amount of pathology and disability as to be dysfunctional and make them disable to support oppressive system.

M. Klicperova[15] in her article suggest a psychological post-communist syndrome developed in most of countries with totalitarian history. This syndrome is mostly psychological in its type because it mostly includes individual symptoms related to cohesions, attitudes and people behaviors developed during totalitarian communism periods. One of her main hypothesis is that totalitarian societies produce totalitarian minds which ensure primary a totalitarian inherence of societies in post-communism. This totalitarian inherence according to her can be called a post – communism syndrome which includes multi psychological functions (cognitive handicap, negative affectivity, negative emotions, handicaps related to passivity in helping, which are typical symptoms or in the opposite sharp-witted abilities combined to abnormal attitudes) which manifest its selves into all social levels (specific handicap to citizen level and civic society. Anxiety is present everywhere cause of political repetitive clearance at every sphere (work, school, culture). Constant observation by secrete police caused fear of reporting/spying which ended up to massive distrust and doubts. Combined with fear related with lack of goods and this doubt contributed to general anger and envy, just as a civilizations' drop out (ct. Shipler, 1984, Klicperova 1996, pg. 3)

Structural and systematic theories[6] suggest that individual behavior, emotional and one's mental health problems must be viewed and addressed within the context of the family and the family must be viewed as a part of more other systems such as school, labour wich has their impact inside the family and its members emotional health.

Empirical evidences

Interviewee were asked if the '90s changes brought or not changes to mental problematic related to their demonstration, type, gravity, their frequency after communism period and their distribution. Secondly, it was asked them to describe if there was or not a typical history of different problematic development between the two periods. Thirdly, they were asked about time periods definition to the highest level of visits. Fourthly, they were asked over psycho- emotional problems before and after the '90s to identify these changes. At the end they were asked to give an opinion over the way they have seen and see emotional wellbeing today and between two periods, when was it mostly threatened to Albanians and why? It is decided to describe four of the most typical interview from 30.

Interview no1, 23 years of experience at a mental health institution

On the first interview related to the most frequent nature of disorders after 1990s are stressed out affective distortion, depression and schizophrenia.

---

[5] Martina Klicperova (1999)
[6] Clinical Psychology (2003)

With system changes there were less people with mental disabilities as a consequence of family and society consciousness to integrate them and inform more the society related to these kinds of problems. New phenomenon: usage of narcotic substances, alcohol which cause depressive deterioration, personality and neural disorders.

The highest number was in the last 96s, 97-98s. The lowest was 2001-2002 with different diagnosis. Lack of information before the' 90s influenced to patients' aggressiveness. Causes ranked by the interviewer himself: emigration, family violence, drugs, alcohol, unemployment and poverty.

According to the predefined causes on the interview, they are ranked as below: inheritance, accidents, psycho-reactive factors encouraged by frustration situations, obstructive or vital unbearable, emotional trauma, life hearting experiences, loss (people, money, house), situational vital factors such as unemployment, economical problem, other aggressively, injustice, emigration, abandonment and living alone, continuous failure etc.

Diseases closely connected to the social life of the patient and difficulties they went through.

After the '90s there was youth inhibition, business, trade, emigration. Social wellbeing had a huge influence. The main reasons are Albanians eagerness to build life quickly and being euphoric to this direction. Cause of this haste, the main was not fulfilled and as a consequence we face pessimism which is enforced and enforced by different difficult situations before and during transition.

Interview no2. 27 years of experience at a mental health institution

Common disorders after '90s: depressive disorders, maniac psychosis, effective disorders. After the '90s the number of depressive cases and affective disorders raised up cause of drugs and alcohol. The highest number was in the years 1997-1998 and half of 1999s, the years with the higher number of mental health disorders. The causes are ranked such as below: unemployment, emigration, poverty, divorce, family violation.

The typical age was 39-45.

The most difficult period was the end of the 1996 till the end of the 1998. Social wellbeing is increased. Patient culture is mentioned as one of the most influenced factor.

Interview no3. 23 years of experience to mental health institution

Hopeless situation of that time, country abandonment for a better life had some influences on the emotional and psychic life; there also was a light increase to mental problems. The end of 1990, 1997 till the late 1998. The most difficult time was the years 1990-1992 and on words. The most frequent were during the post-communism period, affective depressive disorders, maniac psycho and schizophrenia.

The causes are: poverty, unemployment, business and trade problems, drug and alcohol abuse, emigration.

Interview no4. 34 years of experience to a mental health institution

Beginning of the years 1990s brought some changes. Most frequent were the ones after the 1990 such as anxiety disorders, stress, panic, personality till the emotional psycho. The age was 15-25 years old. Gravity and frequency was strongly connected to the age and the risky factors of that time. It is used again the term patient culture. According to this interview, problematic become more frequent and anxiety, humor psychotic were the most common. They were more common to urban areas, especially port and borders. First symptoms: sleep disorders, appétit disorders, withdrawal, behavior disorders (rebellion tendencies).

On the fourth question over nature and treatment differences is stressed that families, schools, society and organizations were sensitized over social problems which influence health and social wellbeing of people and they mostly helped in danger age groups who mostly were youth.

On the questions over a typical history are mentioned: parents cause of children emigration, human trafficking by understanding that some of the patients were trafficked individual, the war of the 1997, which cause trauma, and pyramids schemes as a time mortification to mental and emotional health, trafficked children, ADHS, drug usage and alcohol, failed emigration.

The base of the pyramid on problem and psycho-emotional trouble appearance is defined in the 1997-200 and the highest pick on 2010.

Most of the cases were kept in secret by asking the chemist some un-recommended medicines. These cases were the most difficult one to deal with. A huge influence was cause of patients' culture and social position. Social problems immediately spotted and people were not prepared. The most frequent cases were after the 1990 such as anxiety disorders, panic, emotional, psychotic, and personality. The most frequent one after the 1990s were schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorders, psychotic and personality disorders, epilepsy bases or alcohol usage, phobic neuroses, anxious hypo-condriack. (age group 30-55-60). Before the '90s, they were mostly treated by medicaments. Before the '90s, the attention was over the disorder genetic, alcohol usage and family relation.

The main causes according to interviews' answers: relational problems, consequences of a difficult life, abuses, negative situational vital factors, such as unemployment, economy, and aggression by others, injustices, emigration life, abandoning and living alone. The typical age during these 22 years are 20 to 40. Main causes are system changing and dangerous factors that accompanied that. On the question over a typical history of disease beginning on both periods are drugs, alcohol, kidnapping, trafficking, human lost, money, mate betrayal, economical destruction and in some cases inheritance. The most problematic time was in the 1997-2000. On the question over the after 1990 changes on emotional wellbeing is cited that emotions are not stable any more.

Hospital recoveries rose up cause of loneliness of emigration and as a consequence of long standstill the cases got worse. Most of them are abandon cause of family destruction and economical and cultural level especially in rural areas.

In the last question: Albanian people do not appreciate emotional wellbeing or they restrict it. The same economical and cultural level, opinion and political wing, before the 90s, made people look different, "in peace". After the 90s, with the changes of above mentioned, we faced the settlement of social economical classes, rights and left, peace broke up and stressful factors were more than used to be[7].

Emotional wellbeing most of the time was seen by Albanians as good-feeding, expensive clothing and holidays abroad, while emotional wellbeing is in everyday life, in communication with people, family and social relations.

Interview no5. 28 years of experience to a mental health institution

It is true; the 1990s brought changes in people mentality and thoughts, raise of stress, neuroses and depression.

Property changes from governmental to private influences the way of living, social relations and family ones. Changes took place to every group age, but especially to youth people. Started to take place some new phenomenon such as stress, neuroses or depression, usage of alcohol and smoking, drugs especially by youth. Youth generation lost the interest to education after they lost future prospective. Diffusion of disorders was mostly part of urban life. This movement brought unemployment and emigration which

---

[7] That is answer prescription of the interview not author statement

influenced social and family relationships. Lots of people with weak system started to indicate disorders, initially as stress and then into depression and other serious illness, different types and gravity. Before the 1990s disease diffusion was lower in number because people had some priorities such as work, education, socio-cultural obliged activities.

There was a low number of burglary, drug, alcohol and smoking consuming. After the 90s, a lot of work places stopped existing, activities were closed and unemployment took place, as well as future prospective. These were the mains sources of neuron-psychic diseases. To those phenomenons, there was also present emigration. The ones who remained choose different ways of living, such as pyramid enterprises, gamble by becoming poorer than used to be. This influenced in stressful situation diffusion of more vulnerable emotional and psychic conditions.

Related to the fifth question, the rank is unemployment, drug usage, burglary, conflicts, family destruction, divorced etc. This influenced a lot people psychic and emotional health together with other problem such as prostitution, marital betrayal, and begging, family violence etc. The highest point of problem emerge were the years 1997-1998. Political situations influenced youth people and after some years there was a considerable growing of diseases. The period after the 1990s, ranks some causes: raise of traumas, weapon accidents (hurting and invaliding of a lot of people). This influenced psychologically them and their families by causing more psycho-emotional problems. Property is mentioned as one of the causes that brought conflicts, psychic and social trauma. Related to their treatment it is not emphases the right treatment cause of weak collaboration of patient to doctors and family-patient.

The most frequent phenomena after the 1990s were neuroses, different psychosis, and mental disorders, caused by smoking, alcohol and drugs. The age group was 20-35 years and mostly women. This is because they were the subject of abusing, maltreatment, physical violence, husband gambling. The most common disorders were depression, affective disorders, or humor disorders. Solution of stressful situation is related mostly disorder. The common causes are: unemployment, family violence, psychic and physical trauma, alcohol, drugs, gambling (men). It is thought that this situation is connected to the social environment and cultural level.

There are some causes ranked by the questionnaires: genetic inheritance, socio-cultural factors, family violence, unemployment, emigration, physic and psychic trauma, family destruction etc.

All of them are seen as frequent. The age group which is mostly in danger, cause of their explosion to social and cultural factors, are 25-40 years old. On a question over a typical example, there are two examples; the one of a women who went to depression cause of systematic violence from her husband and the one of a 15 years old boy who was present on a family violence (his father was an abuser and drunker), had a psychic trauma which looked as an anxiety state. It is stressed that is needed a combination of stressful situation solution. The most difficult situations were the years 1997, 1998, and the last couple of years. It is mentioned again the polarization of society in two groups, poor-rich, family violence, drug and prostitution.

Conclusions

Focusing our attention within the interview's answers there are some evidence that need to describe. First some of the words must cited in the text are about system change, family violence, unemployment, economical problems, emigration, drugs and alcohol, patient culture, high speed changes, family disruption, property problems, children movement by emigration, etc. all this tells us two things : first that emotional problems and mental health are related strongly in their perception by social factors such job, family and others. Second, that despite that the psychiatrist where asked to make comparision and evidence for the two periods (during communism and after) their attention in answering where more in the second period. Our

assumption is that they did so because giving a genetic view of problems during communism maded them incapable to disting social factors during the time.

Reference

Beqja H. (2000). *Democratic Transition and Psychology of Today Albanians*. Albanian Academy of Science. Tirana. Albania. Pg 31

Irving B. Weiner, George Stricker, Thomas A. Wideger. (2003) *Handbook of Psychology, Clinical Psychology. Volume 8*. H. Mirsalimi, S. H. Perlerberg, E.L. Stovall, N. I. Kaslow. *Family Psychotherapy* chapter 15, pg 368.

Klicperova M. (1999). *Post-Communist Syndrome*. Researsch Support Scheme Electronic, Library http://e-lib.rss.c2, Praha, Czech republic. Published by Higher Education Support

Ratner C. (2013). *The psychology of oppression*. The encyclopedia of Critical Psychology. Springer, pg 1. Online http://www.sonc.net/~cr2

Program of the Open Society Institute, Budapest, Hungary. Pg 6
Ministery of Health. Albania (2012).